IN THE CLAIMS

This is a complete and current listing of the claims, marked with status identifiers in parentheses. The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A switching device, comprising:

an actuator element including a shape memory alloy, into which an extended shape is impressed at an annealing temperature, the actuator element being fixed at one end and being connected to a movable contact part of a switching contact of the switching device at another end; and

means for heating up the actuator element above a temperature level bringing about an opening of the switching contact on the basis of a change in shape of the actuator element,

wherein the actuator element is ~~one which includes a~~ curved in shape in an operating state in which a switching function of the switching device is not triggered, and ~~is one which rests on a deflecting element with frictional engagement in such a way that the~~ wherein a deflecting element exerts, on a concave inner side of the actuator element, a counterforce partially counteracting the curve of the actuator element only in the operating state in which the switching function of the switching device is not triggered.

2. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the actuator element rests against the deflecting element approximately in a center of the deflecting element, between its two ends.

3. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the actuator element is part of a current path and is heatable by an overcurrent above the temperature level bringing about the opening of the switching contact.

4. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the actuator element is indirectly heatable.

5. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:

a restoring spring, adapted to keep the actuator element in its curved shape in the operating state.

6. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the actuator element is connected to the movable contact part electrically via a stranded wire and mechanically via a switching linkage.

7. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the actuator element includes a shape memory alloy based on at least one of a NiTi and CuAl alloy.

8. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the actuator element is strip shaped.

9. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 2, wherein the actuator element is part of a current path and is heatable by an overcurrent above the temperature level bringing about the opening of the switching contact.

10. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 2, wherein the actuator element is indirectly heatable.

11. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 2, further comprising:

a restoring spring, adapted to keep the actuator element in its curved shape in the operating state.

12. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 2, wherein the actuator element is connected to the movable contact part electrically via a stranded wire and mechanically via a switching linkage.

13. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 2, wherein the actuator element includes a shape memory alloy based on at least one of a NiTi and CuAl alloy.

14. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 6, wherein the actuator element includes a shape memory alloy based on at least one of a NiTi and CuAl alloy.

15. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the switching device is a circuit breaker.

16. (Currently Amended) An actuator element for a switching device, comprising:

a shape memory alloy, into which an extended shape is impressed at an annealing temperature, the ~~actuator element~~ shape memory alloy being fixed at one end, being connected to a movable contact part of a switching contact of the switching device at another end and being curved in shape in an operating state in which a switching function of the switching device is not triggered, wherein the ~~actuator element~~ shape memory alloy is heatable above a temperature level to bring about an opening of the switching contact on the basis of a change in shape of the ~~actuator element~~ shape memory alloy and wherein ~~the actuator rests on a deflecting element with frictional engagement in such a way that the~~ a deflecting element exerts, on a concave inner side of the ~~actuator element~~ shape memory alloy, a counterforce partially counteracting the curve of the actuator element only in the operating state in which the switching function of the switching device is not triggered.

17. (Previously Presented) The actuator element as claimed in claim 16, wherein the actuator element rests against the deflecting element approximately in a center of the deflecting element, between its two ends.

18. (Previously Presented) The actuator element as claimed in claim 16, wherein the actuator element is part of a current path and is heatable by an overcurrent above the temperature level bringing about the opening of the switching contact.

19. (Previously Presented) The actuator element as claimed in claim 16, wherein the actuator element is indirectly heatable.

20. (Previously Presented) The actuator element as claimed in claim 16, wherein the actuator element is connected to the movable contact part electrically via a stranded wire and mechanically via a switching linkage.

21. (Previously Presented) The actuator element as claimed in claim 16, wherein the actuator element includes a shape memory alloy based on at least one of a NiTi and CuAl alloy.

22. (Previously Presented) The actuator element as claimed in claim 16, wherein the actuator element is strip shaped.

23. (Currently Amended) A switching device, comprising:

a switching contact;

an actuator element, fixed at one end, connected to a movable contact part of the switching contact at another end and ~~being~~ heatable above a temperature level to bring about an opening of the switching contact based upon a change in shape of the actuator element; and

a deflecting element, wherein the actuator element is curved in shape in an operating state in which a switching function of the switching device is not triggered, and wherein ~~the actuator rests on the deflecting element with frictional engagement in such a way that~~ the deflecting element exerts, on a concave inner side of the actuator element, a counterforce

partially counteracting the curve of the actuator element only in the operating state in which the switching function of the switching device is not triggered.

24. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 23, wherein the actuator element rests against the deflecting element approximately in a center of the deflecting element, between its two ends.

25. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 23, wherein the actuator element is part of a current path and is heatable by an overcurrent above the temperature level bringing about the opening of the switching contact.

26. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 23, wherein the actuator element is indirectly heatable.

27. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 23, further comprising:

a restoring spring, adapted to keep the actuator element in its curved shape in the operating state.

28. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 23, wherein the actuator element is connected to the movable contact part electrically via a stranded wire and mechanically via a switching linkage.

29. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 23, wherein the actuator element includes a shape memory alloy based on at least one of a NiTi and CuAl alloy.

30. (Previously Presented) The device as claimed in claim 23, wherein the actuator element is strip shaped.

31. (New) The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the deflecting element is in frictional engagement with the actuator element.

32. (New) The device as claimed in claim 16, wherein the deflecting element is in frictional engagement with the shape memory alloy.

33. (New) The device as claimed in claim 23, wherein the deflecting element is in frictional engagement with the actuator element.

34. (New) The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein an intermediate element is included between the actuator element and the deflecting element.

35. (New) The device as claimed in claim 16, wherein an intermediate element is included between the deflecting element and the shape memory alloy.

36. (New) The device as claimed in claim 23, wherein an intermediate element is included between the actuator element and the deflecting element.